

will charge the National Agriculture Statistics Service with continuing to carry out an agricultural census every 5 years. The Ag Statistics Service within USDA is well suited to take over the responsibilities for carrying out the census activities, as they already maintain a network in every state that allows them to put out State by State reports weekly and major reports throughout the year. These reports are utilized by all segments of the agricultural sector in this country and every by our foreign competitors.

I am pleased that Secretary Glickman took the initiative in forging this compromise with the Department of Commerce as well as the Office of Management and Budget to ensure the viability of the ag census for future years. I would also like to thank our colleagues on the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight for their cooperation in ensuring the passage of H.R. 3665 and urge my colleagues to support the passage of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE].

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM] and I thank the gentleman from Texas [Mr. COMBEST]. This is truly a great Texas piece of legislation, but it is very, very important for West Virginia. Let me just say that I appreciate also the full committee chair of both the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight for their efforts as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill, particularly for rural States, rural areas, and particularly for States that have farming of the type that West Virginia does.

□ 1345

If this piece of legislation did not go through, West Virginia will be the most seriously affected State of any State in the Nation in terms of losing its definition of family farm and losing a lot of farms that presently benefit from that definition. West Virginia presently has over 17,000 farms that are defined as farms by the Department of Census, that is, they have sales in excess of \$1,000. Raising that to \$10,000 would cause 78 percent of our farms in the State to lose that definition.

What that means then is that we would be greatly impacted, farmers would not be able to receive certain tax, favorable tax treatment, the distribution of research funds for farms would be altered and also for college agricultural programs as well as the allocation of soil conservation efforts. So clearly this is a very, very significant piece of legislation for much of rural West Virginia and much of rural America.

Simply, what it does is to move the census functions from the Bureau of Census to the United States Department of Agriculture. That is important because the USDA obviously has clear experience with working with farms

and farm definitions, not so the Bureau of Census.

Also, the Bureau of Census has seen its budget cut in this particular area 31 percent. That means they are not going to be spending as much time focusing on what it is that makes up farming and what is important to farmers. I believe that this consolidation moving to USDA will also integrate the agriculture statistic programs of the two departments and eliminate duplication and promote efficiency. The Bureau of Census, I am happy to say supports this move as well.

The USDA has indicated that at least in the foreseeable future, the near future, they do not foresee changing the threshold definition of farming, that is changing the threshold definition from the present \$1,000. That means that there would not be an immediate increase to 5- or, even as had been proposed in the Bureau of Census, to \$10,000. If that threshold level is raised to \$10,000, 78 percent of West Virginia farms will no longer be defined as a farm and therefore not be eligible for favorable tax treatments in certain instances nor will they count towards the formula monies for various agriculture programs, including Soil Conservation Service and agricultural research efforts.

I think this is an extremely important piece of legislation. I just want the chairman to know, and the ranking member, that just as recently as this weekend at various functions people were coming up to me and saying what is being done about the farm threshold. Am I going to be a farmer or not? I was happy to tell them that it is on the floor Monday afternoon and that it should be voted on.

Now, of course this bill will go to the Senate, so it is important that the Senate as well, the other body, take this piece of legislation up. There is no controversy that I can see. It seems to be widely supported. The Bureau of Census supports it. The United States Department of Agriculture supports it. We have got the Agriculture Committees, the Government Reform Committees supporting it. So, clearly it ought to be able to move quickly and get to the President and we can end this anxiety that presently a lot of farmers in my State and many other States are undergoing as they wonder whether or not they are going to see their farm continue with the farm status which entitled them to certain preferential tax treatments as well as figuring into the formula monies for agricultural functions such as soil conservation and ag research.

So I thank once again those who made this possible. Let me just say of the 17,020 family farms in West Virginia, 13,274, or 78 percent, are very, very grateful to us for moving this bill to the floor so quickly.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, just in conclusion, I might point out that this is an excel-

lent example of cooperation between various agencies, cooperation between various committees that will now allow us to do the most efficient census possible with the least amount of taxpayer resources and the best utilization of all of the talents available in agriculture already there in order to do the job that needs doing for American agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude and say I appreciate the cooperation of my colleague, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM], the comments of the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE], and would urge our colleagues to support this legislation under the suspension.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COBLE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas [Mr. COMBEST] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3665, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof), the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 365, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the House stands in recess until approximately 3 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 50 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 3 p.m.)

□ 1503

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COBLE) at 3 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House on Thursday, July 18, 1996 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 3845.